

**“WITNESSES AND INTERROGATORS”**  
**A SERMON BASED ON THE GOSPEL OF JOHN**  
**(1:6-8, 19-28) AND PRESENTED FOR ORLEAN**  
**UMC ON DECEMBER 13, 2020-----**  
**(THE THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT)**

**THERE ARE, TODAY’S GOSPEL SUGGESTS, TWO**  
**WAYS OF APPROACHING LIFE AND GOD’S**  
**PRESENCE IN THE WORLD. ONE WAY IS**  
**DEMONSTRATED BY JOHN. THE OTHER WAY IS**  
**DEMONSTRATED BY THE PRIESTS AND LEVITES.**

***WE ARE EITHER WITNESSES OR***  
***INTERROGATORS.***

**JOHN WAS A WITNESS SENT FROM GOD. THE  
PRIESTS AND LEVITES WERE INTERROGATORS  
SENT BY THE RELIGIOUS AUTHORITIES. “WHO  
ARE YOU,” THEY ASK JOHN. “ARE YOU ELIJAH?”  
“ARE YOU THE PROPHET?” “WHY ARE YOU  
BAPTIZING?” THEY KNOW NEITHER THEMSELVES  
NOR THE ONE WHO STANDS AMONG THEM. THEY  
ARE IN THE DARK. THAT’S HOW IT IS WITH  
INTERROGATORS.....THEY ARE THE  
PRACTITIONERS OF THE WHO---WHATD---WHERE  
AND WHEN CHORUS-----**

**WITNESSES, HOWEVER, ARE DIFFERENT. THEY TALK ABOUT LIGHT. THEY KNOW THE LIGHT.**

**JOHN KNOWS WHO HE IS AND WHO HE IS NOT. HE CLAIMS FOR HIMSELF NEITHER TOO MUCH NOR TOO LITTLE. THAT'S WHAT MAKES HIM A CREDIBLE WITNESS. HE SPEAKS THE TRUTH BUT HE IS NOT THE TRUTH. HE IS ILLUMINED BUT HE IS NOT THE LIGHT. HE IS THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING OUT IN THE WILDERNESS BUT HE IS NOT THE WORD OF GOD. EVERYTHING ABOUT JOHN POINTS TO THE LIGHT AND THE LIFE OF THE ONE WHO BOTH STANDS AMONG US AND THE ONE WHO IS COMING.**

JOHN WILL BET HIS LIFE ON THAT ONE. THAT'S HOW IT IS WITH WITNESSES. THEY LIVE AND DIE BASED ON WHAT THEY HAVE SEEN, HEARD, AND EXPERIENCED.

THE REAL DIFFERENCE BETWEEN WITNESSES AND INTERROGATORS IS THIS. INTERROGATORS DEMAND ANSWERS. WITNESSES OFFER HOPE.

MORE THAN EVER OUR WORLD TODAY NEEDS WITNESSES OF HOPE.... WE DO NOT NEED MORE ANSWERS OR EXPLANATIONS. WE HAVE ENOUGH INTERROGATORS.....JUST READ THE NEWS! OR LISTEN OR WATCH ALL OF THE TALKING HEADS ON THE CABLE NEWS NETWORKS----

**WE NEED TO HEAR “THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING  
OUT IN THE WILDERNESS, ‘MAKE STRAIGHT THE  
WAY OF THE LORD.’”**

**JOHN’S IS THE VOICE OF HOPE. HIS WORDS  
ECHO THROUGH THE WILDERNESSES OF OUR  
WORLD AND OUR LIVES. JOHN’S, HOWEVER,  
WAS NOT THE FIRST VOICE OF HOPE. BEFORE  
JOHN, MARY WAS PROCLAIMING THE  
GREATNESS OF THE LORD. SHE SPOKE OF THE  
ONE WHO SHOWS FAVOR TO THE LOWLY,  
OFFERS MERCY, AND LENDS THE STRENGTH OF  
HIS ARM. HE FILLS THE HUNGRY WITH GOOD  
THINGS AND COMES TO THE HELP OF HIS  
PEOPLE.**

**BEFORE MARY, THERE WAS ISAIAH. THE LORD ANOINTED HIM TO BRING GOOD NEWS TO THE OPPRESSED, TO BIND UP THE BROKENHEARTED, TO PROCLAIM LIBERTY TO THE CAPTIVES AND RELEASE TO THE PRISONERS. HE SPOKE ABOUT GOD COMFORTING THOSE WHO MOURN AND REBUILDING THE RUINS OF THEIR LIVES. THEY WILL BE CLOTHED IN GARMENTS OF SALVATION AND WEAR ROBES OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.**

JOHN, MARY, ISAIAH. EACH ONE IS A WITNESS OF HOPE. THEY LOOK AT THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THEIR LIFE AND WORLD AND SEE A GREATER REALITY. THEY EACH TESTIFY TO A LIFE AND PRESENCE BEYOND THEIR OWN. WITHIN EACH OF THEIR VOICES IS THE WORD THAT WAS IN THE BEGINNING, THE WORD THAT WAS WITH GOD AND WAS GOD, THE WORD THAT BECAME FLESH AND DWELLS AMONG US, THE WORD THAT ENABLES US TO BECOME CHILDREN OF GOD----- EVERYTHING THAT NEEDS TO BE SAID WAS SPOKEN IN THAT ONE WORD. THAT WORD IS OUR ULTIMATE HOPE.

THINK ABOUT THE TRAGEDIES AND  
DIFFICULTIES OF YOUR LIFE: THE DEATH OF A  
LOVED ONE, AN ILLNESS, AN ADDICTION, A  
DIVORCE, GUILT, THE SIN THAT SEPARATED YOU  
FROM GOD, OTHERS, AND YOURSELF. ANSWERS  
AND EXPLANATIONS DID NOT SUSTAIN YOU.  
HOW, WHEN, WHAT, OR WHY WAS NOT WHAT  
YOU NEEDED TO HEAR. IT WAS THE WORD OF  
HOPE THAT GOT YOU THROUGH IT ALL. HOPE  
DOESN'T MAKE LIFE EASY. IT MAKES LIFE  
POSSIBLE. HOPE REMINDS US THAT IT WON'T  
ALWAYS BE LIKE THIS. THERE IS LIGHT AND LIFE  
COMING TO US. IT IS ALREADY HERE AMONG US.



THE INTERROGATORS OF THE WORLD,  
HOWEVER, MAKE IT DIFFICULT TO HEAR THAT  
OTHER VOICE, THE WITNESS OF HOPE. THE  
INTERROGATORS CLAMOR AND COMPETE FOR  
OUR ATTENTION. THEY OFTEN SPEAK THE  
LOUDEST BUT THE VOICE OF HOPE HAS NEVER  
BEEN SILENCED.

WHICH VOICE DO WE LISTEN TO? WHICH VOICE  
DO WE FOLLOW? THOSE ARE QUESTIONS WE  
MUST ANSWER EVERY DAY.

THE REALITY OF HUMANITY IS THAT WE ARE A  
PEOPLE OF THE WILDERNESS. THE REALITY OF  
GOD IS THAT GOD IS THE GOD OF HOPE.

DO WE TRUST THE VOICE OF THE WILDERNESS  
OR DO WE TRUST THE VOICE OF THE ONE  
CRYING OUT IN THE WILDERNESS? THE VOICE  
WE LISTEN TO IS THE VOICE WITH WHICH WE  
WILL SPEAK. WE WILL BECOME EITHER  
WITNESSES OR INTERROGATORS. WE CHOOSE  
WHO WE WANT TO BE.

HOPE IS NOT EASY. WE MUST PRACTICE HOPE.  
IT MEANS WE REJOICE ALWAYS, WE PRAY  
WITHOUT CEASING, WE GIVE THANKS IN ALL  
CIRCUMSTANCES (1 THESSALONIANS 5:16-18).  
THESE PRACTICES ENABLE US TO BOTH HEAR  
AND BECOME THE VOICE OF HOPE.

**INTERROGATORS WILL LOOK AT AND QUESTION THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF REJOICING, PRAYING, AND GIVING THANKS. ARE THE CIRCUMSTANCES RIGHT FOR REJOICING, PRAYING, AND GIVING THANKS? IS THERE REASON FOR THOSE THINGS? THEY WANT ANSWERS, JUSTIFICATIONS, AND REASONS.....WITNESSES, HOWEVER, LOOK BEYOND THE CIRCUMSTANCES TO THE GOD WHO FILLS THOSE CIRCUMSTANCES. THAT IS HOPE. IT OPENS OUR EYES TO SEE THE ONE WHO IS COMING.**

**IT PREPARES OUR HEART TO WELCOME THE**  
**ONE WHO IS ALREADY AMONG US. IT MAKES**  
**STRAIGHT THE WAY OF THE LORD. HOPE IS NOT**  
**A FEELING BUT AN ORIENTATION AND ATTITUDE**  
**OF OUR LIFE. IT IS A WAY OF SEEING. IT ALLOWS**  
**US TO RECOGNIZE AND KNOW THE CHRIST,**  
**ALREADY HERE AND NOT YET HERE.**

**HOPE DOES NOT CHANGE THE CIRCUMSTANCES**  
**OF OUR LIFE -----IT CHANGES US AND THAT**  
**CHANGES EVERYTHING.**

**PRAISE GOD AND MAY IT BE SO FOR YOU AND**  
**FOR ME.....AMEN.....**

